

American Transmission Company, LLC**Blanding's Turtle Avoidance Guidelines
(North Madison - Huiskamp Transmission Line Project)**

In Wisconsin, Blanding's turtles live throughout the state with the exception of the extreme north-central counties. They are most concentrated in the vast marshes along the Wisconsin River in Wood, Juneau, Adams, and Iowa Counties. While Blanding's turtles live primarily in marshes and the shallow bays of lakes, they can be found in shallow, slow-moving rivers, streams and some northern bogs. The Blanding's turtle is semi-aquatic and prefers open, grassy marshes containing shallow water, but it will, on occasion, move upland from the water or wetland fringe areas to forage or bask in the sun. Blanding's Turtles may be active from March to November and breed in early spring and fall. Females begin laying eggs in June and may travel up to 1.5 miles from water to find suitable sandy, open, upland nesting sites. They typically return to the same nesting site each year.

Due to the tendency of this species to range great distances in search of suitable nesting locations this turtle protection guideline only provides a general approach. The following protocol is avoidance guidance and should not result in the mortality of individual turtles or destruction of active turtle nests. This guidance only applies to construction activities within the designated Blanding's turtle range (see attached map). When possible, construction activities will occur during the turtle's non-active period (November - March) thereby avoiding potential disturbance to Blanding's turtles. As long as construction activities within the Blanding's turtle protection areas occur during this time frame then no additional protective measures will be necessary. The following measures are designed to avoid disturbance to Blanding's turtles if construction activities occur during the turtle's active period (April 1 – November 1). An American Transmission Company (ATC) Environmental Representative¹ or Biological Monitor² will monitor construction activities to ensure compliance with this protocol.

- I. If construction of new transmission line structures is within a wetland between April 1 and November 1 and/or requires matting within a wetland for construction access, then appropriate protection measures, such as isolation fencing, will be determined and implemented on a case-by-case basis. An ATC Environmental Representative and/or Biological Monitor will make a preliminary field determination as to the necessity and location for such protection measures and then will obtain concurrence from appropriate DNR staff. Isolation fencing, if and when required, must be installed prior to turtle

¹ ATC Environmental Representative is either an ATC Environmental Project Manager or ATC's Environmental Consultant.

² Public Service Commission of Wisconsin representative employed by ATC to support project construction.

emergence (April 1st). The fencing must isolate the entire wetland area within the transmission right-of-way affected by the construction activities and a 50-foot upland area along the transmission right-of-way adjacent to the affected wetland. The fencing will be installed with turn-back wings at each end facing away from the wetland (Figure 1).

II. If Blanding's turtles or turtle nests are found within the isolation area after the fencing has been installed, or in any areas subject to construction activities, proceed as follows:

- A. If Blanding's turtles are found within the isolation fence or in any areas subject to construction activities, prior to or after construction activities have been initiated, then all Blanding's turtles found will be relocated by an ATC Environmental Representative or Biological Monitor outside of the fencing to a suitable habitat area no less than 50 feet from the isolation/construction area. ATC will document and report occurrences of Blanding's turtles found within the isolation area to the OE within 24 hours.
- B. If nesting Blanding's turtles or turtle nests are found within the isolation fence or in any areas subject to construction activities, prior to or after construction activities have been initiated, then construction will be temporarily suspended within an appropriate radius of the nest or nesting activity (to be determined by the ATC Environmental Representative or Biological Monitor) until the PSC, OE and ATC can jointly determine an appropriate course of action.

III. If accidental Blanding's turtle mortality or nest destruction occurs as a result of construction activities, proceed as follows:

If accidental Blanding's turtle mortality or destruction of Blanding's turtle nest occurs, then ATC will temporarily suspend all construction activities related to the mortality and notify the OE within 24 hours of discovery. The activities will remain suspended until OE considers appropriate action under 29.604 Stats. and provides authorization to proceed. The Blanding's turtle carcass will be preserved and turned over to the appropriate WDNR personnel and the location of the accident will be flagged for further documentation by the DNR or Biological Monitor when applicable.

IV. Fence Installation and Monitoring – If isolation fencing is required as defined above then the fence will be installed to a height no less than 16 inches and to a depth no less than 6 inches below the ground surface. The ends of the fence will be turned back according to the attached fence layouts. The fencing will be inspected twice weekly on non-consecutive days to ensure the integrity of the fence. Repairs will be made within 24 hours of discovery.